

and of social construction had been almost indistinguishable. By the very nature of its task, as much as by the intention of its rulers, it had become the greatest of political institutions. For good or evil it aspired to be, not a sect, but a civilization, and, when its unity was shattered at the Reformation, the different Churches which emerged from it endeavoured, according to their different opportunities, to perpetuate the same tradition. Asceticism or renunciation, quietism or indifferentism, the zeal which does; well to be angry, the temper which seeks a synthesis of the external order and the religion of the spirit—all alike, in one form or another, are represented in the religious thought and practice of the Middle Ages.

All are represented in it, but not all are equally representative of it. Of the four attitudes suggested above, it is the last which is most characteristic. The first fundamental assumption which is taken over by the sixteenth century is that the ultimate standard of human institutions and activities is religion. The architectonics of the system had been worked out in the *Summa* of the Schoolmen. In sharp contrast to the modern temper, which takes the destination for granted, and is thrilled by the hum of the engine, mediaeval religious thought strains every interest and activity, by however arbitrary a compression, into the

service of a single idea. The lines of its
scheme run
up and down, and, since purpose is universal
and all-
embracing, there is, at least in theory, no
room for
eccentric bodies which move in their own
private orbit.
That purpose is set by the divine plan of the
universe.

" The perfect happiness of man cannot be
other than
the vision of the divine essence." ¹⁰

Hence all activities fall within a single
system,
because all, though with different degrees of
immediate-
ness, are related to a single end, and
derive their
significance from it. The Church in its
wider sense is
the Christian Commonwealth, within which
that end is
that